

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO AMEMBASSY WARSAW

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 8500

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 2196

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, PFOR GB PL

SUBJECT: REASSIGNMENT OF GABON PERMREP

REF: USUN 4054

1. LIBREVILLE DAILY NEWSPAPER "L'UNION" CARRIED ANNOUNCEMENT OCTOBER 19 THAT GABON AND POLISH PEOPLES REPUBLIC HAD AGREED TO ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AT THE LEVEL OF AMBASSADOR. JUDGING FROM INFORMATION VOLUNTEERED BY GABONESE FORMER UN PERREP ESSONGHE (REFTEL) GABON AT LEAST INTENDS TO HAVE RESIDENT AMBASSADOR.

2. JEAN- BAPTISTE ESSONGHE FIRST APPEARS IN EMBASSY BIO FILES WHEN NAMED FIRST COUNSELOR OF GABON MISSION AT EUROPEAN OFFICE OF UN IN GENEVA IN NOVEMBER 1969. ESSONGHE NEXT SURFACES WHEN APPOINTED FEBRUARY 1974 AS GABONESE AMBASSADOR TO LIBYA. ESSONGHE APPARENTLY HAD SHORT STAY IN LIBYA SINCE HE SOON MOVED TO TUNIS AS GOG AMBASSADOR THERE. IN AIRGRAM WRITTEN IN AUGUST 1975, UPON ESSONGHES TRANSFER TO NEW YORK AS GOG PERM REP TO UN, US AMBASSADOR CHARACTERIZED HIM AS " WELL DISPOSED" TOWARDS THE US HAVING SERVED PREVIOUS TOUR IN WASHINGTON WHERE HE FORMED " EXCELLENT RAPPORT" WITH DEPARTMENT OFFICERS. ESSONGHE ALSO DESCRIBED
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AS " DIGNIFIED" RESERVED INDIVIDUAL WHO MIXES WITH

DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES IN SOMEWHAT STIFF MANNER.

3. ESSONGHE IS BEST REMEMBERED BY EMBASSY HERE BECAUSE OF INCIDENT OVER "UNFRIENDLY " KOREAN RESOLUTION AT 30 TH UNGA WHEN HE APPEARED DETERMINED TO ABSTAIN, CLAIMING NO CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIS GOVERNMENT DESPITE ASSURANCES GIVEN BY FONMIN TO BOTH US AND SOUTH KOREANS THAT HIS INSTRUCTIONS WERE CLEARLY TO VOTE AGAINST RESOLUTION. PRESIDENT BONGO EVENTUALLY INTERVENED AND ORDERED ESSONGEH TO VOTE AGAINST RESOLUTION, BUT SOUTH KOREANS BELIEVE HE WAS ON THE TAKE TO NORTH KOREANS. INCIDENT MAY HAVE BEEN REASON THAT BONGO REPLACE ESSONGHE THIS YEAR AND SENT HIM TO LESS DESIRABLE POST IN WARSAW.

4. WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION WARSAW CAN PROVIDE CONCERNING GOP PLANS FOR NAMING AMBASSADOR TO GABON. STEIGMAN

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